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# Public Health Reports

Treasury Department, United States Marine-Hospital Service. Published in accordance with act of Congress approved February 15, 1893.

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VOL. XIII.

WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH 25, 1898.

No. 12.

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## UNITED STATES.

[Reports to the Supervising Surgeon-General United States Marine-Hospital Service.]

### *Smallpox at Middlesborough, Ky.*

MIDDLESBOROUGH, KY., *March 14, 1898.*

SIR: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to telegraphic orders, Surgeon-General's office, March 10, 1898, I arrived here last evening at 8 o'clock. This morning, accompanied by Dr. A. T. McCormack, chief State sanitary inspector, who, with four assistants, is in control here, I visited the pesthouse and found 49 cases of variola and 23 suspects. There are also 400 suspects quarantined at their homes. The first case occurred in October, 1897, and was imported from Birmingham, Ala. The State board of health took charge of the epidemic on February 28, 1898, declaring the disease epidemic, and since that time there have been 169 cases and 2 deaths to this date, 34 of the cases being white and 135 negroes, one of the latter being a child one day old, the eruption appearing at the same time on mother and child. The population numbers about 4,200, and consists chiefly of the employees of the furnaces and a tannery, and miners, who live in the town and work in the adjoining mines. Nearly, if not quite, half the population are negroes. The town has been absolutely quarantined since February 28, no one being allowed either to enter or leave it. Sixteen guards, one day and one night, guard each of the eight roads leading to the town, and no tickets are allowed to be sold either to or from the town, and practically there is no travel. Since the board of health took charge, 1,960 people have been vaccinated, and forcible vaccination is still progressing. The occasion for the request for an officer of the Marine-Hospital Service was as follows: Middlesborough was a "boom town," started some ten years ago, and several million dollars were invested here in various enterprises. In two or three years the "boom" col-

lapsed and left the town stranded with a heavy debt. When this epidemic came it found the town without a dollar in the treasury. The place is practically owned by two or three companies, and everybody works on a salary. These companies paid up their taxes in advance, and all having been expended, there were no other funds for the city to draw on.

The county, which is also heavily in debt, has been haggling with the city in regard to an appropriation, but none has been made. The city script is worthless, and the grocer who has been furnishing the supplies refuses longer to accept it. The physicians and guards are practically getting no pay. Under these circumstances the State board of health threatened to withdraw all guards and physicians, and quarantine the entire county, unless the county provided funds to care for the epidemic. In the presence of this threat the mayor requested that an officer of the Service be sent to investigate, trusting that the Government would come to their aid financially, if not otherwise. I am informed by Dr. McCormack, chief sanitary inspector, who is a son of the secretary of the State board, and who is acting for him here, that the disease is under control and that the State board is entirely able to care for it, it being the determination of the board to force the county to provide funds. To-day the patients are without food. A committee of citizens met and discussed the matter, and have wired the situation to the governor and the State board, asking them to request the assistance of the Government. Chief Inspector McCormack informs me that the board will not make such a request, claiming that it is able to handle the situation itself. Under these circumstances I do not see that the Service can do anything further in the matter. There are a few cases of variola at Jellico, Ky., but Dr. McCormack informs me that they are under control and thoroughly isolated. Numerous little towns and villages within a radius of 20 miles have instituted "shotgun" quarantines, and will allow no one to enter or leave them, though they have no smallpox in them. Among these places may be mentioned Pineville, Ky., Cumberland Gap, Morristown, Greeneville, Limestone, Jonesboro, and Tazewell, all in Tennessee. Some of these places will not allow any one to get off the train. While en route to this place I had to delay several hours in Knoxville, and called on the city physician and met several of the prominent business men. I am informed that in Knoxville there have been 16 cases of variola since December 14, 1897, and 30 suspects; that there are now 5 cases in the pest boat, which is anchored out on the river above the city. I am informed that the disease is under control in Knoxville and no further danger is feared except from reinfection.

Respectfully, yours,  
C. P. WERTENBAKER,  
*Passed Assistant Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S., on Special Duty.*

*Smallpox in Mobile, Ala.*

MOBILE, ALA., March 19, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to report that 8 cases of smallpox have been admitted to the pesthouse since my last report, making the total number of admissions 30, with 1 death. Twenty-three cases now under treatment.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. D. MURRAY,  
*Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.*